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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

4th April, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

The last two numbers of the News-Letter have contained Supplements on Christians and Full Employment. Full Employment is one of the great issues which the nation has to face in the near future : it raises in an acute and practical form the question of the relationship of Christianity to the social order.

CHRISTIANS AND FULL EMPLOYMENT

Long term unemployment and the fear of it have been recognized, not least by Christians, as one of the cruellest scourges which afflict men and women in modern society. The general acceptance of unemployment as an unavoidable concomitant of a highly industrialized society and the consequent concentration on ways and means of mitigating its rigours, have in recent years been shattered by the growing conviction of many economists that large-scale, long-term unemployment can be abolished. The burden of the first Supplement by " Civis " was that for Christians to acquiesce in the continuance of large-scale unemployment, when the technical means of abolishing it lay to hand, would be sin.

The immediate question which everybody will ask is What is the price of this great good—not so much in terms of money as in terms of effort and sacrifice? There are two brands of cure in the market (there may be more than two before we have finished). The first, put out by the Government in its White Paper, aims to bring about " a high and stable level of employment " ; the second, by Sir William Beveridge in his *Full Employment in a Free Society*, aims at full employment, meaning " always rather more jobs than there are people to fill them." They contain some ingredients in common. Both exact a price from all sections of the community, and Sir William's price is the steeper. Criticism of the White Paper policy, on the ground that its technical shortcomings will prevent it from working in practice, have come from Sir William Beveridge and from the political left. We have deliberately omitted these technical criticisms from our discussions, not because they are not important, nor because we disagree with them. Indeed it is of the greatest importance that Christians should weigh fully Sir William's conclusion that in regard to the control of private investment the

White Paper is only "re-exploring an avenue which has already been proved a *cul de sac*," that it treats industry as a "sovereign independent state to be persuaded, influenced, appealed to, and bargained with by the British State" and that "the whole section on central finance is based on a wrong sense of values." If the scheme won't work, Christians are not morally bound to try to make it do so. These considerations are expounded elsewhere at greater length and with more ability than we can command, and we used our limited space to develop the issues (not by any means entirely separable from technical questions) which particularly affect Christians.

It is natural that when it is being debated what contribution in effort and sacrifice employers, investers, trade unions, and so on are to make for the common good, someone should ask "What about the Churches? Isn't it their business to provide the moral drive which will carry the thing to effect?" The second Supplement underlined the fact that, if a full employment scheme is an engine which will only work given some special kind of Christian fuel, it is a bad engine. When Lord Shaftesbury brought in his first factory act in 1833, he did not trust to a moral drive, but insisted on a legal provision for a first-class inspectorate. It is not the job of the Church to do the State's work for it. At the same time Lord Shaftesbury's inspectorate would have had a short life but for the Christian employers who welcomed it and the men who manned its ranks and fought its battles in its earlier days. Christians are meant to be salt; but salt is not a whole meal.

Still less can the Church pledge itself to support any scheme of the secular state or secular organizations of society in the sense of making such support binding upon its members. The test of a true Christian would then tend to become whether he supported full employment, or the Government side in the Spanish war, the result of which is to raise these issues into the same category as the historic dogmas of the Faith itself. When this is done (and it is near to being done whenever it is forgotten that the Church is different from secular institutions of all kinds primarily by reason of what it *believes*), it is a short step for secular society to insist that the Church's faith should be that kind of faith which produces the desired results. The Church as Church has its own autonomous field where it exercises its authority by preaching and teaching its faith and by being, both by what it says and by the pattern of a divine society which it produces in its own life, a perpetual challenge to perfection. All social schemes are based on implicit assumptions about the nature and behaviour of man. "The designers," said "Metoikos," in our second Supplement, "certainly are entitled to expect the ordinary degree of decency in the community." We do

not know what degree of decency would become "ordinary" if the Church ceased its teaching and the ordinary Christian his witness.

But the obedience of Christians to their faith is practised in the world. Here Christian men and women are daily confronted with choices which involve moral decision. Here they have daily to act, and failure at these levels is disobedience to the divine will. No Christian can refuse to decide and act in the great issues which confront society without incurring the same falling from grace as he would be ready to recognize in a failure of obedience in his personal life. But this question of obedience is anything but simple. Either the layman is left to interpret the gospel according to his own conscience and to act entirely alone, or we must see rising up to meet the new situation new means of effecting communication between laymen who, rather than the clergy, bear the brunt of these decisions and face the necessity for action. The main interest of the Church in society in the past fifty years or so has been in social service, and both local congregations and denominational bodies have devised their means of operating. The main battle front is now shifting. No longer are we goading a grudging and reluctant State to assume responsibilities. More and more it is the State itself which takes the initiative in plans which affect ever-increasing areas of human life. The fight of the future to maintain Christian values and bring society into conformity with them will go on within politics, and within the secular autonomies of industry, education and economics. For this reason we need new means of helping those who have to combine obedience to the gospel with right decision and action on technical issues.

The burden rests heavily upon Christian men and women who possess in any field expert knowledge or executive responsibility. But it certainly does not rest on them alone. It is the people who will have ultimately to decide—the voters, shareholders, trade union members who are not experts either in economics or in theology. The Christian believes that the secular world is not only the sphere of his obedience, but of God's rule. It is this knowledge which prevents him from being inhibited from action by lack of expertise. He decides and acts by the light of knowledge, judgment and conscience, and trusts the outcome to God.

AMERICA AND BRITAIN

There has been a growing tension of feeling between this country and the United States which everybody who cares for the future ought to be concerned to mitigate. Every new phase of the war brings its own irritations and difficulties. On this side of the

Atlantic nine out of ten people look forward to a long sleep or a holiday as the most desirable way of celebrating victory. That does not mean that our vigour in prosecuting the war has declined. It certainly has not. But it does mean that we are more easily irritated. It is very trying, for example, to go to the cinema and see American films (and the American quota has so increased that the only way of avoiding seeing them is by staying away from the cinema) which depict an attitude to the war, and to personal separation in particular, which we left behind three years ago. There have been words about rationing on both sides of the Atlantic, and there will doubtless be other disagreements and misunderstandings as we proceed. No friendship is ever without them.

We warmly welcome and reprint part of an article published in *Christianity and Crisis* by Professor John C. Bennett. Professor Bennett took a leading part in the Oxford Conference as the secretary of the section dealing with Christianity and the Economic Order.

He writes as follows :—

" We are now in a period of mutual criticism between America and Britain that is painful to those of us on both sides of the Atlantic who have for years been upheld by our close fellowship in the Christian community and who have shared a common outlook on world problems. *Christianity and Crisis* was founded when Britain stood alone against the Nazi terror, and one of its chief purposes was to interpret the cause of Britain to the American Church in those days of almost complete darkness.

" Our gratitude to the British people for making it possible for the world to save itself from Axis domination can never be adequately expressed. We admire profoundly the way in which Britain is seeking to solve her own problems by developing a more truly democratic community. When I think of Britain I think of William Temple and Sir William Beveridge ; of the creative thinking that has been done concerning the relationship between Christian faith and the problems of the nation by J. H. Oldham and his colleagues in the Christian News-Letter ; of the Christian restraint that the British people have always shown in their attitude towards the enemy in this war, an enemy at whose hands they have endured so much. *Christianity and Crisis* will continue to remind American Christians of these things.

" Americans, when they criticize Britain, must always keep in mind that when there is much substance to their criticisms they are usually shared by a very large part of British opinion. There are always two Britains, just as we hope that there may always be two Americas. But more important than this recognition that the

British people are really the most self-critical people on earth, at least when they are not away from home, is the exercise of a similar self-criticism on the part of Americans. The reason that the most thoughtful organs of opinion in Britain resent American criticism is that it is so self-righteous and so blind to the extent to which our own policy is responsible for British blunders. It we criticize Britain in Greece or Italy, why do we forget our own strange attempt to build up Giraud against de Gaulle? If we criticize British imperialism, why do we pass over the threat to the very existence of the British people in our own unrestrained economic power, a threat against which political imperialism may seem the only protection? If we criticize British action in the case of such complicated problems as the Polish question, what are we to say about our own refusal to act, our own evasion of the problem?

"The British people, when they hear American criticisms, also need to acquire a better perspective. They should realize that unlike Britain, America is a nation of minorities. A large part of the criticism of Britain comes from minorities which have special interests that are at stake. There are Polish-Americans who are naturally sensitive to British policy in regard to Poland. There are Italian-Americans who feel very strongly about Italy. There are Zionists who keep their eyes fixed upon everything that Britain does in Palestine. And there are Irish-Americans who are always glad for a new stick with which to hit the British. It is unfortunate that the British get very little credit for their amazing restraint in dealing with Ireland to-day. Some of these minorities have greater power than their numbers would suggest. I do not intend to imply that these minorities are always wrong, but that they are apt to be explosive and one-sided.

"Whenever Americans criticize it should be understood by the British that there are two kinds of criticism. There is the criticism which is really an extension of much British self-criticism and which is often accompanied by a full recognition of the faults in American policy. But there is also the natural tendency for the many groups in America which have a special interest in some aspects of British policy to be unqualified in their condemnation. They drown out the first kind of criticism. It would help if the British understood this situation. They should also realize one other fact about American opinion and not become too excited when it appears. In parts of America there is an almost inevitable isolationism that is geographically conditioned. American isolationists have a habit of making Britain a scape-goat. Just as British opinion which *Christianity and Crisis* trusts does battle against the imperialistic spirit in Britain, so we in America must always do battle against these isolationist tendencies which are a natural result of remote-

ness from Europe. They are morally neither better nor worse than the kind of British isolationism that we associate with Chamberlain's remark about Czecho-Slovakia's being so far away.

"After all these things have been said, no friend of Britain in America and no friend of America in Britain should ignore the fact that there are some real issues on which British and Americans do generally differ. The clearest example is the problem of India. The British are right in thinking that most Americans over-simplify this problem, that there is a tendency here to assume that the Congress Party represents the only element in India that need be taken seriously. Also they can remind us of the appalling contrast between our own pretensions and the status of the Negroes in America, a fact that often stares them in the face as they watch the behaviour of our troops in England. But it is difficult for Americans to avoid the conclusion that at present both British opinion and British policy are complacent. Their admiration for and gratitude to Winston Churchill are very great, but they are troubled by his record on the Indian question. There is at present a psychological impasse in India and in Asia as a whole that can only be overcome by British acts that will prove that Britain does intend to give India independence. Words here no longer convince, but such acts would create a new climate in Asia and among colonial peoples everywhere. They would do more than anything that can now be imagined to overcome the cynicism about British imperialism that, in a setting which is often unfair and self-righteous as far as we are concerned, does much to poison relations between Britain and America."

THE SUPPLEMENT

The writer of this week's Supplement is Dr. David Mace, Secretary of the Marriage Guidance Council and Clinic. He has for many years made a special study of the history of marriage and of the Church's teaching. We asked him to gather together in supplement form the statistical facts about marriage in present-day society.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

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THE OUTLOOK FOR MARRIAGE

By DAVID R. MACE

Few would question that one of the essential foundations of a stable post-war society is sound family life, and that the basis of a sound family life is a secure relationship between husband and wife.

What is the outlook for marriage in post-war Britain? The danger of making estimates based upon purely subjective judgments is great; therefore, we shall confine our evidence here to facts and figures contained in statistical returns, the accuracy of which is not open to question.

It is not sufficient to consider the marriage relationship by itself. Marriage is the most intimate bond which can unite a man and a woman; but it cannot be isolated from other relationships between the sexes. We must, therefore, examine two areas of relationship: that between men and women outside marriage, and that within marriage, and ask what is happening in each of these areas to certain standards and ideals which have been traditionally accepted by the community.

RELATIONSHIPS OF MEN AND WOMEN OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

For long centuries, the Church has enjoined the virtue of chastity for man and woman alike, as the standard best calculated to preserve the highest integrity of the individual and of the community. It would be idle to suggest that anything like universal adherence to that standard has been achieved; but at least its right to be considered a worthy ideal has for centuries been accepted without serious question.

Since the beginning of the present century we have seen a marked change in public opinion, encouraged and reflected by the novel, play, film and other equally powerful influences. Further, we have had increasing reason to believe that this change of attitude was finding expression in a corresponding change of conduct.

Until recently, there was no accurate means of judging what was taking place. We deplored illegitimate births, but we knew that the recorded figures were no true index of the number of conceptions which were taking place outside wedlock. Many more, we suspected, were covered up by the marriage of the couple concerned before the birth of the child.

The Population (Statistics) Act, 1938, came into force on July 1st of that year. From that date it became necessary for those who registered a birth in England and Wales to give at the same time the date of the marriage. In the Registrar-General's returns for the half-year July–December, 1938, a new section (Table QQ) analyses these figures. The period which elapsed between marriage and maternity is given, for the first year, in months. If we take the number of maternities [1] recorded in this table as occurring within the first eight [2] months of marriage, and add the number of illegitimate maternities for the same period, we shall arrive at the total of maternities occurring during that half-year, which represent extra-marital conceptions.

The following table sets out these figures, and certain others to which I wish to make reference,[3] for the years 1938–1943 inclusive :—

	[4] 1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
Maternities up to eight months after marriage	54,926	57,895	55,612	41,645	39,213	36,433
Illegitimate Maternities	25,348	26,924	26,871	32,179	37,597	44,881
Total Maternities representing conceptions outside marriage	80,274	84,819	82,483	73,824	76,810	81,314
Total First Maternities	247,386	254,815	255,439	247,342	284,198	294,571
Total of All Maternities	619,928	636,060	622,376	592,813	665,838	697,267
Estimated Unmarried Women of Ages 15–49	4,938,000	4,921,300	4,696,000	4,550,200	4,440,300	4,383,000

The average number of women who bore children, extra-maritally conceived, during each year of the period in question is almost exactly 80,000. This represents a proportion of 1 in 3.3 of all first maternities. Since the vast majority of conceptions outside marriage would represent first maternities, it can be confidently inferred that nowadays at least one mother in four conceives her first child outside marriage. The ratio of conceptions outside marriage to *all* conceptions is almost exactly one in eight.

[1] A maternity takes no account of multiple births. It is, therefore, the correct index for our present purpose, the incidence of conception.

[2] Nine months might be taken as the basis of reckoning. But I am anxious in this statement to err always on the side of caution. The few pregnancies of less than eight months, representing conceptions within marriage, would be far outweighed by those lasting longer than this period, and representing extra-marital conceptions.

[3] I am indebted to the Registrar-General for these figures, and for his permission to reproduce some hitherto unpublished.

[4] Since figures are only available for the second half of 1938, I have doubled them to make them correspond with the figures for the full years which follow.

It is obvious, however, that these figures conceal more than they reveal. It is known that in some rural areas there still persists an old custom requiring that fertility should be proved before marriage; so that a few of these women would have deliberately wished to become pregnant. But it is doubtful whether these would be more than a tiny fraction of the whole. The vast majority would not have intended to conceive a child; but they were either too ignorant or too careless to take preventive measures, or they did so without success.

There must have been others who conceived outside marriage, but whose pregnancies were terminated by abortion, either spontaneous or induced. No accurate estimate can be made of the abortion rate in this country. The Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the subject, published in 1939, quoted an earlier and cautious estimate made by the British Medical Association, to the effect that 150,000 abortions were taking place annually. This represents one abortion to about every five births; a figure which seems to be generally accepted. If we take this ratio of 1 to 5, and apply it in the same proportion to extra-marital conceptions our previous figure of 80,000 becomes 96,000 annually. This represents the number of women whom we *know* to have had extra-marital sex relations. It is based on the most cautious estimates. It could probably be reckoned in round figures at 100,000 without any fear of exaggeration.

The figure just given, if taken by itself, would imply that effective means of contraception do not exist. But everyone knows that such means not only exist, but that they have been the central factor in the bringing about of our changing standards. It is precisely because contraception theoretically offers to safeguard the woman against unwanted pregnancy that chastity is considered obsolete and is being abandoned in many quarters. And, while it is plain that the "casualty" list is high, the fact remains that the best modern contraceptives are on the whole very reliable. It is obvious, therefore, that in addition to the women we have been considering, there must have been many who in extra-marital sex relations successfully prevented pregnancy.

At this point we are, of course, in the realm of pure hypothesis. How many extra-marital affairs successfully avoid resulting in conception, as compared with those which fail to do so? I have invited several people to speculate upon the answer. No guess made to me has been lower than four to one, and the average has come nearer the region of eight to one. This would mean that, on the most conservative estimate, the total number of women who each year indulge in sex relations outside marriage is at least

half a million. On the average estimate, the number is nearer a million.

The bottom row of figures in the table shows that, from 1938 to 1943, the average estimated number of unmarried women (single, widowed and divorced) in England and Wales, whose ages were fifteen to fourty-nine inclusive, was just over four and a half million. If, therefore, the guesses which I have just recorded are anywhere near the truth, it follows that, in the age groups concerned, the number of unmarried women in this country who have abandoned their chastity is at least one in six. If we left out women over forty, it would undoubtedly be higher still.

I repeat that this is a purely hypothetical estimate. But whatever estimate is accepted, the broad picture shows a definite change in our standards of sex morality. Women have been regarded as the traditional guardians of chastity. If they have grown thus lax in their standards, it is only logical to conclude that the same trends have been operating amongst men, who have never as a group been so chaste as women. The incidence of venereal disease, which is the only accurate basis upon which any estimate of masculine morals can be made, certainly confirms this view ; for despite every attempt at regulation, these diseases have increased alarmingly during the past few years.

The picture of what is happening outside marriage, therefore, is not a pleasing one for the moralist to contemplate. It is not my concern here to consider the ethical questions involved in this large-scale departure from the standard of chastity.[1] But something must be said about its effects upon marriage.

Some of those who indulge in sex relations before marriage are no doubt engaged couples who marry later and suffer no lasting ill effects. Others, however, involve themselves in emotional tangles and break-off engagements which otherwise might have gone smoothly. Yet others go on to marry against their better judgment because they feel that in anticipating marriage they have committed themselves irrevocably to it ; especially is this so when the woman has become pregnant.[2]

The most serious matter, however, is the way in which lax sexual standards outside marriage invade the marriage relationship itself. If men and women become accustomed to making free with one another before marriage, their valuation of the marriage bond will inevitably be lowered. It is impossible to allow sexual freedom

[1] This is fully discussed in my recent book, *Does Sex Morality Matter ?* Rich and Cowan, 5s.

[2] It has been estimated from the new figures that of all girls who marry under the age of twenty, no less than 40 per cent are pregnant beforehand. In girls of twenty, the proportion is 30 per cent ; in girls of twenty-one, it is 20 per cent. These forced marriages of young girls are notoriously unstable.

to the unmarried, while the married are sealed off in a compartment labelled "Don't touch." Chastity before marriage and fidelity after it are not separate standards which have been arbitrarily lumped together. They are inextricably connected facets of one fundamental principle. The abandonment of chastity will, therefore, inevitably be followed soon after by the abandonment of fidelity. This is what is actually happening.

RELATIONSHIPS OF MEN AND WOMEN INSIDE MARRIAGE

Christian teaching has always declared that marriage called for complete fidelity between the partners as the only secure foundation for sound and stable family life.

Since the beginning of this century, and particularly in recent years, we have witnessed a gradual disintegration of the bulwarks which in the past kept marriage a secure and steadfast institution. This is evidenced by the increasing rate at which marriages are breaking down at the present time.

How may marriages break down? The only safe index we have comes from those Courts which sanction divorce and legal separation. Clearly this will not account for *all* marriage failures, for some people would suffer much before taking their personal affairs into a court of law, but it makes as accurate a criterion of the rate of marriage breakdown as is possible to obtain. We need to know in how many cases the intervention of a court is *applied for*, for the application itself indicates that marriage has broken down.

Consider first the divorce rate. In 1857, divorce with the right of re-marriage was made legal in this country, the sole ground being adultery. Before this date each divorce required a Private Bill in Parliament, a procedure so costly that it is said that up to 1836, when marriage by a registrar was made legal, England had not seen more than three or four hundred divorces since the Reformation.

After 1857, the divorce rate in England and Wales crept up gradually from 24 in 1858 to 249 in 1877. The average per annum during those twenty years was about 150. At the opening of the present century, the number of divorces granted each year was about 500. In the years prior to the First World War, it was hovering about the 600 mark. The war period caused considerable increases, and the rate rapidly doubled. After the war, in 1920 and 1921, the figure soared higher still, reaching a temporary peak of 3,000. It then dropped down to 2,500 in 1922; but thereafter it began a long steady climb.

What happened next is shown on the graph on the back page.

It will be seen that the steady climb continued until 1938. In that year the Herbert Act came into operation, and the figures rose steeply. In 1939 and 1940 they dropped again to within just over 1,000 above the 1937 level. But those were the dark years in which people were preoccupied with national survival. Later, when the tide began to turn, and people began again with some confidence to plan for the future, the figures soared up until they had well-nigh trebled anything known previous to the Herbert Act. They are still soaring. The number of suits commenced in 1944 (not shown on the graph) was about 19,000, an increase of 4,000 on the 1943 figure. If the trend of events which followed the last war is repeated, the figures may rise to 25,000, to 30,000, or even higher, during the post-war period.

Divorce, however, presents us with only one aspect of marriage breakdown. In this country the dissolution of a marriage costs, at the present time, about £100. Poor people cannot afford this; and such facilities as exist for their relief are at present hopelessly inadequate. Legal separation, on the other hand, arranges for the payment of the woman's maintenance money much more surely than does divorce. Consequently the broken marriages of the poor go, in the main, to the magistrates' courts. There grounds for separation are frequently proffered which would be equally valid grounds for divorce. Indeed, people will occasionally start with a legal separation; and later on, when they can afford it, or after the appropriate period has elapsed, "turn it into a divorce." [1] No estimate of marriage breakdown can be based upon divorce figures alone.

There are three procedures enacted in the magistrates' courts which involve the separation of the parties and, therefore, the break-up of the marriage relationship. These are the making of *Maintenance Orders* for wives, *Separation Orders* without provision for maintenance, and *Guardianship Orders* for infants. The figures for these various orders for England and Wales are normally to be found in Table XI of the Criminal Statistics. No figures have been issued since 1938, but I have been able, through the courtesy of the Home Office Statistical Branch, to include the unpublished figures up to and including 1943.

Again, our present concern is with Orders applied for rather than with those granted. Up to 1935, these were conveniently published side by side. Since then, only the figures for orders granted are available in the blue books. The ratio of these is ten

[1] The amount of overlapping thus caused in the marriage breakdown figures is probably negligible at the present time. But it may well increase in the future and have to be taken into account.

applications to every seven granted, and the ratio may be assumed to be roughly constant.

Similarly, figures for Separation Orders without maintenance, or for Guardianship Orders, between 1923 and 1935 are unavailable, but estimates based on available data are tolerably reliable. Any inaccuracies which may result are of a very minor nature, and could not make any appreciable difference to the graph on the scale upon which it is drawn here.[1]

The rate of marriage breakdown as evidenced in applications to the magistrates' courts is shown in the middle one of the three continuous lines on the graph (*b*—*b*). Though in the earlier period it is much more variable than the divorce rate, it follows after 1933 an almost identical course: rising steadily until 1938, dropping sharply between that year and 1940, and then soaring rapidly to a record figure in 1943. The figure for 1944 is not yet available.

The upper continuous line (*c*—*c*) shows the sum of the two others and represents the total rate of marriage breakdown. It has just doubled between 1933 and 1943. Since 1940 it has been increasing at a tremendous pace.

As they stand, these figures convey only a very general impression. Mounting totals necessarily give cause for serious thought; but in order to take the real measure of the situation we must relate these breakdowns in some way to marriages as a whole.

Probably the best way to do this is to compare the number of marriages which fail with the number of new marriages which are entered upon in the same period. If we can know the ratio between these two figures for twenty years, we can conjure up a mental picture of what is really happening to marriage.

The lower line (*x*—*x*) represents one-twentieth, the upper line (*y*—*y*) one-tenth, of the total number of new marriages which took place in the years under consideration. They, therefore, represent 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively of the marriage rate. To put it in another way, these lines show what graphs would look like which depicted a marriage breakdown rate of exactly 5 and 10 per cent respectively.

Now by comparing the continuous lines with the dotted ones we can see roughly what proportion of marriages have been breaking down during recent years.[2] Except in 1940, when the marriage

[1] The number of marriages which apply for court intervention is far greater than these figures represent. In large numbers of cases the Probation Officer is able to persuade the parties not to take any legal action.

[2] It is important not to misunderstand this. We are comparing new marriages begun with all marriages which break down in the same period. Thus a 10 per cent breakdown rate obviously does not mean one in every ten new marriages fail within a year. It means that, if the breakdown rate is sustained at 10 per cent, one in ten of these new marriages is doomed to ultimate failure.

rate was phenomenally high and the breakdown rate dropped momentarily to a low figure, the rate of marriage breakdown has been more than 5 per cent during the entire period. Apart from the exceptional circumstances of 1939 and 1940, the breakdown rate has been steadily increasing since 1934. In 1943 a situation occurred which was quite unique. Each of the two types of court showed separately that year a breakdown rate of more than 5 per cent. Consequently, the total breakdown rate crossed the 10 per cent line, climbing fast. It is possible that when the 1944 figures are known we may find that the increase has mounted sufficiently to bring the breakdown rate up to 15 per cent.

Certain factors must be borne in mind in basing any judgment on these figures. Many of these breakdowns are not final and permanent. Couples legally separated sometimes go back to one another, and even divorced persons do so. The figures I have given here only record the rate of breakdown, without considering the question of what finally happens to the marriages in question.

On the other hand, however, two further groups must be included in this survey. First, there are those who, finding it impossible to go on living together and being unwilling to take their affairs into a public court or unable to furnish valid evidence, enact by mutual agreement a private deed of separation drawn up by a solicitor. There are also those who simply drift apart, taking no action at all. The number in these two categories is unknown. It is probably not large.

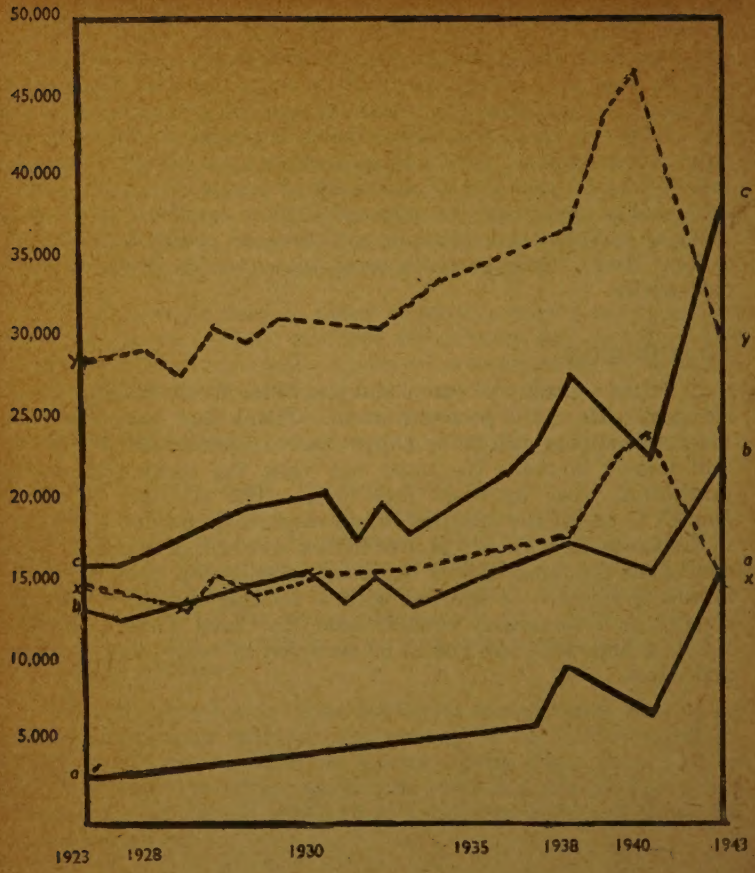
Secondly, there are those marriages which reach a state of serious disharmony without ever coming to open disintegration. Every doctor, parson or social worker knows many such. Often these couples go on living together for years in a relationship which is a mere façade behind which there is nothing worthy of the name of true marriage.

By and large, therefore, we must face the fact that modern marriages are suffering at least a 10 per cent breakdown rate. This inevitably means that each year thousands of new people in this country become disillusioned, and many of them cynical, about the whole business. In these days they do not hesitate to say so, which does not elevate the sanctity of the marriage bond in the public mind. Much worse, however, are the consequences of homes broken up, for shorter or longer periods. It is needless to dwell upon the tragic effects upon the children of parents who have failed to manage their relationship with one another. To this must be added the tangles which, in these days of indulgent public opinion, result from the liaisons entered into by many who have failed in marriage

and consequently find themselves sexually and emotionally frustrated. In the old anti-divorce days, many couples doubtless endured much unhappiness by being irrevocably shut in together. But at least they were kept from invading the lives of others in attempts to compensate for their failures and conflicts. It is this feature of the present situation which is pregnant with such disruptive possibilities ; the cumulative effect upon society of releasing into it year by year tens of thousands of people who, having failed in marriage, must seek to cope with their emotional and sexual needs as best they can, unless or until they can establish a successful union. Every marriage which breaks down means two such people cast adrift.

CONCLUSION

This is a gloomy picture ; and one which forebodes grave perils for family life in the post-war world. Thank God, the majority of marriages appear still to be happy, and the family life of our land still largely sound. We must not view the scene with undue pessimism. Yet we must face facts. The situation is serious enough to arrest the attention of all responsible people, and indeed of the nation as a whole. It is of little use to talk of improved social conditions for family life if the basic relationship upon which the family is founded is smitten with a wasting disease. " We are soon to have temporary houses," said Mr. Claud Mullins, recently, " Let us hope they are not to be occupied by temporary husbands and wives."



KEY TO GRAPH

a—*a* Applications for Divorce.
b—*b* Applications for Legal Separation.
c—*c* Applications for Divorce and Legal Separation Combined.
x—*x* Marriage Breakdown Rate of 5 per cent.
y—*y* Marriage Breakdown Rate of 10 per cent.

The lowest of the three continuous lines *a*—*a* represents divorce and nullity. The figures plotted are those for *suits commenced* in the year in question.

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